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ABSTRACT

This is the first kit in an innovative series of activities intended primarily for use in a bilingual education setting. It is designed to encourage children to use oral language in natural, spontaneous ways. The kit includes an explanatory booklet describing the aims or functions of language, the modes through which the aims of discourse are achieved, some observations on a new perspective on language and an introduction to the "informing" activities. The 44 learning activities are printed on colored cards coded according to the mode of presentation, that is, informing by description, by narration, by classification and by evaluation. The activity cards describe the materials the children need to carry out the activity, special instructions and pointers for the teacher, and supplemental activities. All information is presented in English. It is noted that the activities could be conducted in any language since the goal is always the same: expanding spoken language through experience. (AMH)

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Doing Things with Language: Informing

by Carole Urzúa, Ph.D.

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Foreword

Doing Things with Language is an innovative series of activities designed to encourage children to use oral language in natural, spontaneous ways. This first kit addresses the specific language aim informing. Since the activities are printed on color-coded cards, the teacher may select and sequence them according to the needs of individual students.

Although all information is presented in English, activities may be conducted in any language since the goal is always the same: expanding spoken language through experience.

Requests for information concerning *Doing Things with Language* or other materials for bilingual education should be addressed to the Dissemination and Assessment Center for Bilingual Education, 7703 North Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78752.

Joel Gómez, Director

Dissemination and Assessment
Center for Bilingual Education

Introduction

Researchers in the fields of first- and second-language acquisition have begun recognizing what teachers have known for years: language is always used purposefully. All aspects of language—

Sounds
Morphemes
Syntactic patterns
Meanings
Skills in speaking, writing, listening

are only important as parts of a greater whole: the purpose for using language. As speakers and as listeners, people are concentrating on the message being communicated and why that message is being communicated. The speaker has a purpose for saying something. For example, he/she wants to make you laugh and relax and, therefore, chooses words, sentence patterns, and sounds to be effective for that purpose. If you as listener perceive those words, sentences, and sounds as fulfilling the purpose, you will laugh. Each word, sound, position in the sentence, etc., has contributed to the purpose being fulfilled, but you are rarely conscious of these aspects unless you yourself want to accomplish a particular purpose through these means.

This purpose for using language can be called many things: language purpose, language use, language function, language aim. In these materials the phrase *language aim* will be used.*

In order to communicate a particular aim, you are probably subconsciously aware of some components of language. Mainly you are aware of the person speaking, the person(s) listening, and

*This discussion and indeed the entire theoretical model for these materials are based on James Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse*, published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971.

the product, or the language itself. When one or the other of these three components is emphasized, a certain aim is being stressed. To understand how this works, let's examine the four aims of the process of using language.

The Four Aims

Suppose you, as a listener,

> write a journal about your own feelings, or
> express your emotions for your spouse, or
> recite a religious credo or manifesto.

The component of the language process that you are emphasizing here is the person speaking, in this case yourself, as you develop aspects of your own personality through language. This aim of language, with an emphasis on the speaker (the encoder), is called *expression*.

> I'm nobody! Who are you?
> Are you nobody, too?
> Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
> They'd banish us, you know.

Thus, Emily Dickinson wrote in 1861, leaving on the printed page her feelings pressed into words. Swearing might have accomplished the same thing. Or "singing the blues." Or griping. Or writing a diary. In all of these, the speaker is expressive of his/her own attitudes and is using the expressive aim.

If, however, the language used emphasizes the person receiving or hearing the language (the decoder), the aim of language is *persuasion*. When using this aim of language, a speaker is purposefully sensitive to the decoder, hoping to persuade the receiver to believe in something, do something, take up a cause, buy a product, permit a certain action. In our world of mass media and myriad causes, persuasive language is important to know about and to learn to use effectively.

If emphasis is shifted to the message itself (or better, how well the message represents reality), the aim is *information*. An example (perhaps not the best!) of language used to inform is the language of this introduction. I want you to have information about the aims of discourse before you begin looking through the activities. I try to use words to represent a reality as I understand it. So I inform you. How effective I am can partly be determined by whether you're still with me—and willing to go on!

Sounds, words, sentences when put together in pleasurable ways, ways which are truly worthy of appreciation, are aspects of the final aim of discourse: *literature*. Language here "calls attention to itself, to its own structures, . . . structures worthy of contemplation in their own right" (Kinneavy, p. 39). Oral language

abounds with examples of the literature aim. Can you think of some? How about these:

Jokes
Puns
Jump-rope rhymes

Emily Dickinson's poetry fits here, too. So do Shakespeare's plays. And Norman Lear's soap operas.

To summarize, them there are four aims of language. Were you informed enough to get them all?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

A crucial note: the four aims have been separated in the previous discussion so they might be studied. However, in most situations, aims overlap. Good persuasive language includes information. Good informative language keeps you interested by weaving language to entertain or perhaps self-express throughout the informative work.

The Four Modes

If you are actively involved in the informing process of this introduction, you have probably conjured up many questions. Perhaps some of these questions are, "How do I persuade?", "How do I express myself?", "How do I go about producing literature?", "How do I inform?" The four aims of discourse are achieved through four modes: description, narration, classification, and evaluation A speaker wanting to develop a particular aim will use one or several of the modes. Meet the modes:

Description: Focusing on the static nature of a subject, description is used when the sender perceives a situation and uses language to report what the senses tell him/her. Think of this mode as language used to describe a scene, like a picture or photograph.

Narration: Focusing on the dynamic nature of events and emphasizing the change in things, narration uses cause and effect and chronology of events to tell how an idea develops.

Classification: Focusing on how events and things relate and do not relate, classification compares characteristics and sees how parts relate to other parts and to the whole.

Evaluation: Focusing on the value and quality of events, evaluation frequently utilizes narration, description, and classification as data to arrive at an evaluative conclusion.

The modes are rarely found isolated; like the aims, modes play primary and secondary roles when achieving a purpose. For example, your friend telling you about an exciting trip to East Texas campsites (the aim of informing) may use all the modes:

Narration: "First we went to . . .; then we . . ."

Description: "You should have seen the beautiful campsites."

Classification: "Most of the camping areas in the national forests are isolated."

Evaluation: "The national forests are clearly the best because . . ."

In addition, although the primary aim of this discourse is informative, it may also have elements of persuasion if your friend thinks you should make a similar trip, and perhaps even literature, if words are chosen to create certain effects.

A New Perspective on Language

It's obvious to you by now, I'm sure, that this way of looking at language is different from the perspectives of the past. For one thing, there is a shift away from language as a subject to be studied (e.g., whether you use *lie* or *lay* in the sentence, "I ____ the book on the table"), to a view of language which emphasizes the meanings and intentions to be shared. Nearly all recent researchers who have studied children acquiring both first and second languages have pointed out that children learn syntax and pronunciation *in order to* do things, to communicate a message, to share a meaning. (Undoubtedly the best persuaders are infants! Note how, within a few months, infants use different cries for different needs; "I'm wet," is clearly different from "I'm angry." Later they'll use words for the same persuasive messages.)

No one, not even infants, just naturally uses language to express more and more meanings. The key appears to be in the diverse situations which children encounter and in the many children and adults they interact with. Through what is still a relatively unknown process, children continue to "stretch" their language to meet the demands of various situations, concentrating first on themselves, then on others, and then on the message or the reality. Quickly, however, their language aims overlap. A child persuading another child to let her use a toy may use informative

language in order to do so. In informing his mother about the daily activities of the classroom, a child may use literature—alliterations, puns, or jokes. Only when caring, interested, actively listening people interact with children in diverse situations do language aims begin to emerge in ever widening circles of use.

By now another question may have arisen:

> Why should I, a teacher, bother with this new perspective on language?

Again, back to recent research. Upon entering school, children differ in abilities; one study with monolingual children showed that these differences often relate to the way children "do things" with language. For example, leaders are frequently children who persuade well, or who use literary language well, making other children laugh. Furthermore, social class differences are indicated not so much by grammatical differences but by differences in the ability to use language well in diverse situations. This research has implications for students learning second languages. They frequently are victims of stilted language lessons which give no opportunity to engage in all aims of language; often these children are never able to become fluent speakers in a second culture.

This new perspective, looking at the meanings and purposes of language is supported by child development literature as well. Children are active processors of life, gaining much more when they are the initiators, the hypothesizers, the putting together-ers. They throw themselves fully into understanding the meaning of the world around them. Language is just one of the ways in which they express that meaning.

There is one final reason for you as a teacher to be interested in this view of language. In the pragmatic world of teaching, creating activities which give children the opportunity to use language for certain aims via certain modes might be the most satisfying, fun teaching you've ever done. Perhaps that's the best reason of all!

Informing

The purpose of informing is to represent reality through words. The speaker intends, therefore, to discuss a topic, report an event, summarize a movie, analyze a picture. In classrooms this aim is seen most commonly when the teacher shares information of all sorts with students, and vice versa. The information can be about content, directions, school rules, etc. In fact, in one informal study done at the University of Texas at San Antonio, students observing in public schools found that teachers used informative language an average of 85 percent of the time. In a study done at Ohio State, however, one researcher found first grade children, when talking to each other, used informative language only 15 percent of the time; these children were in an unstructured, open classroom. It appears that the informative aim is used more often by adults than by children. The Ohio State researcher concluded her discussion of informative language by noting that children did inform others about objects, living things, and events of the world they knew. They named and observed things. She also pointed out that "If children know they are expected to draw their own conclusions, to explain things to each other, and to figure out things for themselves, they are more likely to move away from looking to the teacher for 'right' answers."*

With the importance adults place on informing, it seems essential that children be given opportunities to learn how to inform well. Who they inform about what is the stuff of the curriculum for your language class. As a teacher you'll want to give children ample opportunity to experience how to inform. The

*Gay Su Pinnell, "Language Functions of First Grade Students Observed in Informal Classroom Environments," unpublished paper, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1976.

more experiences they have—with people of different ages and positions—the wider their repertoire of informing abilities will become.

The activities that follow are divided according to the mode of presentation, i.e., informing by description, by narration, by classification, and by evaluation. Activities are not normed by ages or sequenced according to difficulty; rather it is expected that you will choose those activities cognitively appropriate for individual children in your classroom. The format of the activities describes the materials the children need (*They need*) to carry out the activity (*They do*). Special instructions to you the teacher and additional pointers are listed under *You do*. Under *More* you'll find supplemental activities or extensions of the main activity for those who are enjoying the task or who would like to experience more in the informing aim.

Good teachers will recognize how most of the activities, though classified under one mode or the other, can actually help develop all the modes at the same time. Here's what I mean.

Suppose you have sea horses in an aquarium in your room, and you and a group of children are clustered around the glass case. Without your saying anything, children will automatically use descriptive terms, e.g., "Oooo, look. He's got his tail hooked around the weed." To encourage narration, you might say, "Let's watch and see what he does next." Language such as the following might be the result: "After he hooks his tail, then he goes to sleep." In the same observation some children will doubtlessly wonder why sea horses are called horses, and other children might answer, using classificatory language, that they have heads that look like horses. Some sharp classifier may go on to tell you how horses and sea horses are different. So far, you've said very little, and three modes have been used in natural, meaningful ways! To round out the discussion, evaluative language could be encouraged by strategies such as "What will we have to do to keep our sea horses happy?" or "I think when the water gets cloudy, we may have to change it."

The keys to full use of discourse as illustrated in this example are (1) an interesting experience, (2) a supportive environment in which langugage is accepted, encouraged, and enjoyed, and (3) an active listener who responds to the comments made as being worthwhile and meaningful.

The first key, the interesting experience, is attempted in the activities which follow. Perhaps the criteria for choosing an activity is whether you yourself would enjoy doing it. The second and third keys are your responsibility; if children's effective use of language is going to grow, you must accept their offerings, listen with great interest, and support what they're saying. Good luck and happy informing!

Informing/Description

They need:

A small table with a barrier in the middle to prevent people seated on either side from seeing each other. On one side of the table, place a board with pictures from magazines pasted to form a collage. On the other side, place an identical board and duplicate pictures not pasted down.

They do:

The person with the pasted-down pictures describes the collage so that the second person can construct an identical picture using the duplicate pieces. The participants may talk and ask questions, but they may not see each other's pictures. When the first person is finished describing, she goes to the other side of the table to see if the pictures match. Without saying anything, she returns to her side and makes further descriptions which the second person needs to make the collages the same.

You do:

Since the two participants provide feedback to each other, you do not need to intervene. To encourage the use of different language when talking with people of different ages, vary the participants. Play the game yourself as the person assembling the pieces. Ask volunteer parents to take this role, also. Or let a student who is a good describer give the clues. Then change roles with a new collage.

More:

1. Vary the pictures according to age and language ability. For easy collages use only a few pictures of common objects; arrange more pictures for older children.

2. Use pictures of the same kind of object (e.g., balls) varying only one characteristic (e.g., size, color.) Then vary two characteristics (e.g., various sizes of red and blue balls).

3. Put a series of pictures in a sequence that tells a story. Elements of the story line may be interwoven with the description. This activity is informing by narration.

Informing/Description

They need:

Two telephones connected with a long cord (the phone company loans working telephones to classrooms on a short-term basis). Or make a "phone" using two paper cups or empty juice cans. Poke a hole in the end of each cup, and pull a 15–20 foot string through the cups with the open ends facing out. Knot the string at each end. By keeping the string taut, the children can "talk" to each other. They also need several pairs of identical pictures; each speaker has one picture from each pair.

They do:

Make sure the children can't see each other, and then decide who is to start. That person begins describing one of the pictures. When the other person thinks she knows which picture it is, she identifies it. Then the children change roles with a new picture.

You do:

This is a good time to allow children the opportunity to practice distinguishing language used with people of different ages and in different roles. A volunteer parent or an aide can be on the other end of the line. Or a younger child. Or a stranger. Observe which children use the phone well. Pair them with children just learning how.

More:

1. At one telephone provide pictures which illustrate emergency situations (e.g., fire in a house). The child at that phone calls the appropriate emergency service (e.g., fire station) and reports the incident. Use the emergency numbers for your area.

2. Place a card file of information needed about certain places (e.g., opening and closing times of the post office) beside one of the phones. Responses are printed on other cards at the second telephone.

3. For homework have children call stores, movie theaters, etc., for information.

Informing/Description

They need:

Several plastic cups filled with primary colors of tempera paint, several pieces of colored chalk, or several plastic cups filled with water and food coloring. Each child needs a shirt or apron, different surfaces to paint on (plain white paper, brown bags, towels, waxed paper, newsprint), and paint brushes. Spread newspapers over the work area.

They do:

Each child works alone but at a table with two or three friends. He sees how many different colors can be made from the colors provided.

You do:

No intervention is necessary. Children will automatically share color perception with their friends, thereby using informative language. To differentiate language use by age and status, you can use one of the following strategies to encourage the children to talk to you:

a. "I see you've found many different colors."

b. "How may colors do you suppose are possible with only two paints?"

c. "Oh, look. Putting paint on the towel makes it look _____, but on the brown bag it looks _____."

Sit down and do the activity yourself. Observe the language of children who talk a great deal during the activity and those who don't. Note similarities and differences. Plan an activity to capitalize on the similarities.

More:

1. The children go outside with the water and food coloring and paint the sidewalk.

2. The children pretend they work at a cosmetic company or a paint company. They create as many different shades of nail polish or paint as possible.

Informing/Description

They need:

A windy day. Classroom materials will vary from glue to paper clips to staplers to string.

They do:

The children go outside and collect things which they can use to make kites. After making their kites in the classroom, they go back outside for a kite-flying contest.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. Your supervision is essential since you provide materials to make the kites! Children will automatically share their perceptions with their friends. To differentiate language use by age and status, you might try one of these intervention strategies:

a. "What are you doing to your kite to help it fly?"

b. "What a great assortment of materials you are using!"

Informing/Description

They need:

Lots and lots of plastic drinking straws and play dough or clay. Put newspapers on the desks or floor before starting.

They do:

The children build structures.

You do:

No intervention is necessary. Children will automatically share the experiences, name what they are making, fantasize new structures, especially if they are in small groups. Observe which children work best in an unstructured situation such as this activity and which ones don't. Plan a similar lesson with more structure for those children who need it. To differentiate language use by age and status, sit down and do the activity yourself. Invite the principal to join you. Invite children from upper grades to join you.

More:

Refer to the unit on structures in Elementary Science Study *published by Webster/McGraw Hill, New York.*

Informing/Description

They need:

Paper plates or shallow boxes; glue; and many natural things to put on the plates such as seashells, dried plants, rocks. If you combine this activity with a field trip to a vacant lot, or a walk around the school, you can use whatever the children find.

They do:

Each child makes an arrangement on a plate and glues it down.

You do:

No language intervention is needed. The child will automatically share her perceptions with the three or four people surrounding her. Observe interactions of the children, looking for the following social "rules": Are there people some of the children never talk to? Do some children talk freely with their peers but never talk with you? Do some boys talk only with boys, and never with girls? Do some girls talk only with girls, and never with boys? Share the arrangement with the class only if the artist wants to.

More:

1. Use a theme for the day (e.g., happiness), and let everyone make a "happy" arrangement.

2. For cooperative ventures, encourage several children to make an arrangement together. When there are disagreements, you might intervene and help them learn how to resolve differences.

Informing/Description

They need:

Small balloon, a soft drink or catsup bottle, funnel, vinegar in a small jar, baking soda in a container, and a teaspoon. Each small group will need a complete set of materials.

They do:

The children in each group do the following tasks in the order given:

1. Pour an inch of vinegar into the bottle. It is a good idea to pour over the sink (especially if the group doesn't have a funnel).
2. Put two teaspoons of baking soda inside the balloon.
3. Quickly slip the open end of the balloon over the neck of the bottle.
4. Watch what happens.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. If the children are with friends in small groups of three or four, they will automatically share their observations about what happens to the balloon. Observe at least three children who use precise informative language; in future activities put them in groups with children not so precise. Your intervention strategies might be the following:

a. "I see there is a reaction between the vinegar and the baking soda."

b. "I wonder what's going on inside the bottle?"

c. "How can you tell something is happening?"

Science objectives can be met at the same time.

More:

1. Vary the size and kind of balloon. The children can draw faces on the balloons.

2. Leave the balloons alone. Have the children observe how long they'll stay up.

3. The children draw pictures in sequence illustrating what happened. Those who want to can share their pictures with other classes, other groups, or the principal.

4. The children write poems about the experience.

Informing/Description

They need:

Tempera paint, somewhat thick; plastic cups or small containers; knife; potatoes and carrots; paper towels or newspapers; different kinds of paper. Spread newspapers over the work area, and pour small amounts of paint into the containers.

They do:

The children cut designs into potatoes and carrots. Then they dip the vegetables in the paint and blot them on paper towels or newspapers. Next, the children press the vegetables onto different kinds of paper to make designs.

You do:

No intervention is necessary. If the children are with friends in bunches of three or four, they will automatically share their designs with others. To differentiate language use by age and status, sit down and do the activity with some of the groups.

More:

1. The children make wrapping paper, notepaper, and greeting cards.

2. The children describe in writing on the notepaper they have made what they did with the vegetables.

3. They use other objects found in the classroom to make designs.

4. Each child makes a name stamp from a long carrot.

Informing/Description

They need:

A blindfold and a classroom divided into areas for groups of three or four children to work in.

They do:

One child sets up an obstacle course while another is blindfolded. A third child guides the blindfolded one through the obstacle course by giving him verbal directions. Encourage directions such as going under chairs, over toys, around chairs.

You do:

This is a fine time to observe who uses precise language when describing the situation ("There is a small toy in front of you and to the left. Step up at least a foot and step over it"). The results of imprecise language will be immediately apparent without any intervention from you. If any groups get bogged down, intervention strategies such as the following will help them proceed and learn something about how to inform:

a. "I think Emilio needs to give more specific directions."

b. "Perhaps Anita needs to know which direction to move."

More:

The students play a modified version of Simon Says by having some of the children be Robots and others be Masters. Masters give directions such as "Robots, turn to the south," "Robots go where the sun sets."

Informing/Description

They need:

Clay or play dough. Spread newspapers over the work area. The following recipes use inexpensive materials for making play dough if commercial clay is not available.

a. Mix 1 cup of flour, 1 cup of salt, and 1 tablespoon powdered alum together and slowly add 1/2 cup water. Add food coloring before or after adding water. Store in plastic bag. Keeps a week in refrigerator.

b. Mix 1-1/2 cups flour and 1/2 cup salt. Slowly add 1/2 cup water, 1/4 cup vegetable oil or a few drops of liquid detergent, and food coloring. Knead the dough well and shape into several balls. Makes enough for two people. Keep in airtight container in refrigerator.

c. Put 2 cups salt and 2/3 cup water in a pot and bring to a boil. Mix 1 cup cornstarch with 2/3 cup water and stir well. Blend the two mixtures together and knead into clay. Takes several hours to dry. Keep in airtight container in refrigerator.

They do:

The children play with the clay, modeling whatever they like. This activity fits in with other units in the curriculum. For example, a unit on community helpers can end with the class making helpers out of clay. A science unit on animals of the desert can include modeling animals out of clay.

You do:

No intervention is necessary. With friends around them, children will begin discussing their perceptions of the models they are making. Observe who talks about the modeling process while actually doing the modeling; who talks about animals in general, when modeling an animal; who says nothing throughout the entire process. Make some judgments about what can be done to encourage nontalkers to use informative language among their friends.

More:

1. *Let different-aged children work together.*
2. *Sit down and model with the children.*
3. *Display the finished products of those children who volunteer to share their work. Anyone who wishes may give an on-the-spot explanation of his model.*

Informing/Description

They need:

Construction paper scraps; newspapers; tissue paper, all colors; glitter; glue; scissors; empty, almost whole egg shells. The egg has to be shaken out of a small hole at the top of the shell. Spread newspapers over the work area.

They do:

The children cut confetti out of colored construction paper and tissue paper to make *cascarones*. Then they fill the egg shells with confetti and cover them with tissue paper. Then they decorate the eggs with glitter. At Easter, *cascarones* are used in fun by cracking the egg on someone's head and spilling confetti in her hair!

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. Children will automatically share their perceptions of the task. A good thing for you to do is to observe helping behavior and how language is a part of that behavior. Some young children won't use scissors well; some children will have trouble filling the egg; etc. Who asks for help? From whom? How do they ask? Who volunteers? To differentiate language use by age and status, you might use this strategy to encourage children to talk to you: "I see you've cut out many colors for your confetti."

Informing/Description

They need:

A bucket or small plastic container. In the container make a solution of cornstarch and water, mixing the two until the consistency is like putty. Towels and water should be handy, but cleanup is easy if the activity takes place on the floor, with newspapers spread all around.

They do:

The students play with the mixture. The properties of cornstarch make this a fascinating material.

You do:

No intervention is needed. Children will automatically share with friends their perceptions of the material, how it changes, and how they feel about it. Observe which children ask questions and make hypotheses. To encourage questions, provide more stimulating materials for those who don't question. To differentiate language use by age and status, volunteer parents and grandparents can drop by and use any of the following strategies to encourage children to talk to them:

a. "I see you've got some interesting stuff there."

b. "Hey, what are you doing?"

To differentiate language use by audience size, children who wish may share their perceptions in a "recap" experience after all the children have cleaned up.

Informing/Description

They need:

Balancing scales of any kind, pairs of identical objects. Simple scales can be made from coat hangers and boxes attached with string if commercial scales are not available. Place one object from each pair on either side of the scale. Increase the number of objects according to the age of the children, beginning with five objects for four- and five-year-olds.

They do:

The children work as partners. The first child tells her partner which object she is placing on the scale. The second child finds the matching object and places it on his side of the scale. The scale balances if the first child described the object clearly enough and if the second child responds correctly.

You do:

No intervention is needed. To differentiate language use by age and status, vary the people who play together, or play the game yourself with one of the children.

More:

1. Make the objects more difficult to differentiate. For example, use five blocks of the same color with differences in tone—darker, lighter, etc. Or vary the sizes of the objects. Or provide realistic dolls. Or provide everyday objects such as silverware.

2. The children try to play the game blindfolded.

Informing/Description

They need:

A bowl or a cup of water; a small bit of soap; some sugar; wood shavings (pieces of toothpicks may be used; small pieces of cork or pepper may be substituted).

They do:

The children sprinkle the following items into the bowl or cup in order:

1. the wood shavings
2. the soap
3. the sugar

You do:

No intervention is necessary. If the children are with friends in small bunches of three or four, they will automatically share their observations about how the soap interacts with the shavings and what influence the sugar has on the mixture. They will generate their own questions such as "How come that happens?" Encourage the groups to answer all the questions that arise. If you want to expand informative language, you might respond, "That's a good question. What are some reasons you can think of?"

More:

1. *Use a different liquid such as corn syrup.*
2. *Use salt or cornstarch instead of sugar.*

Informing/Description

They need:

A make-believe microphone made of a decorated toilet-paper tube, or a real microphone so children can record their voices.

They do:

A child who volunteers acts as a reporter who interviews interesting people. Children who want to participate choose a "career" or a person they would like to be. The interviewer asks the participants, one at a time, to describe their working environment; for example, a spaceship pilot can describe the spaceship and aspects of his job. If the conversations are recorded, the participants will want to hear their voices. Encourage the reporter to keep the tapes for you to listen to later.

You do:

No intervention is necessary, though you and the reporter might discuss the kinds of questions to ask. If a tape is kept, listen to differences in the children's descriptive abilities. Plan several similar activities for those who do not expand much in their descriptions. To differentiate language use by age and status, ask the reporter to interview you, the principal, the janitor, the counselor, the cafeteria worker.

More:

To integrate this activity with other content units, have the participants choose characters that would be appropriate for those units (e.g., different community helpers for a unit on community helpers, pioneer characters for a unit on early American history, an immigrant family moving to Texas in 1825 for a unit on Texas history, a Mexican family during the Mexican revolution for a unit on Mexican history).

Informing/Narration

They need:

Two telephones connected with a long cord (the phone company loans working telephones to classrooms on a short-term basis). Or make a "phone" using two paper cups or empty juice cans. Poke a hole in the end of each cup, and pull a 15–20 foot string through the cups with the open ends facing out. Knot the string at each end. By keeping the string taut, the children can "talk" to each other. They also need several identical sets of pictures which can be sequenced to tell stories. Each participant is given one series of pictures in a particular set.

They do:

One speaker tells a story which can be illustrated by putting the pictures in a certain order. The other person listens to the story and sequences his pictures based on the story he hears. When he is finished, the speakers hang up the phone and check to see if the sequences are the same. They switch roles and work with another set.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary from you. If the pictures are not sequenced in the same order and the participants are still interested in the activity, help them analyze what the speaker said and what the listener heard so the children can learn how to sequence better the next time.

Informing/Narration

They need:

Materials chosen by the children (possibly hobby materials) and a small area to make a booth.

They do:

Hold a How-to-Do-It Fair. Children demonstrate and explain how to do certain tasks and use certain items. Some ideas: how to fly a kite, make a birdhouse, give a dog a bath, bake cookies, make a terrarium, eat spaghetti, grow herbs, make clothes, collect snakes, take care of a pet.

You do:

It will be beneficial to children to have several different kinds of groups visit the fair at different times. For example, peers from another class can visit, then younger children, then older children. As the students begin to differentiate informing language according to the age level of the audience, point out the different types of language used and tell them how well they communicated with their audiences.

More:

Have a Game Fair, in which everyone explains how to play games, such as Monopoly, Old Maid, baseball, soccer, loteria, *darts, etc.*

Informing/Narration

They need:

A Polaroid camera.

They do:

While on a field trip or a walk, the children take pictures. Even everyday occurrences like standing on the corner provide experiences to be captured on film and presented to the class at a later time. The students can observe traffic patterns, watch people, and note the businesses on the corner.

You do:

As children share their pictures with small or large groups, observe who uses temporal adverbs well and who takes into consideration that the listening audience has not been on the same trip. For those children who would like to do more narration, put the words *First*, *Next*, *Then*, *Finally*, or similar words on a bulletin board or poster board. The children can glue their pictures under the proper words to help them use the adverbs easily.

More:

1. Send the children to the same corner at various times of the day to take the same picture. They can present information on how the activity on the corner changes according to the time of day.

2. See Yellow Pages of Learning Resources *edited by Richard Wurman, published by MIT Press, for further ideas about what you can learn from commonplace experiences like standing on the corner.*

Informing/Narration

They need:

A Polaroid camera or a series of pictures of events which children can readily relate to.

They do:

Working in teams or pairs, children tell a simple story by photographing four events in a series. Children may act out events to be photographed or may take pictures of an actual situation, such as putting up the flag in the morning. If the team wants to share their story, they may mount the pictures and tell the story using the photographs.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. To introduce this activity, you may want to present a series of pictures of yourself or other teachers. You can then model good narration while informing by telling the class what your pictures represent. Observe the children as they decide what pictures to take and as they present the information to the group. Who narrates well? What are the specific characteristics of good narration?

More:

Use write-on slides or filmstrips to depict events occurring in a sequence.

Informing/Narration

They need:

A Polaroid camera.

They do:

Organize the class into teams. Each team takes a picture outdoors sometime during the week and keeps the time secret from the other teams. Each picture should include some clue as to when it was taken. At the end of the week, the children sequence all the pictures according to time of day and discuss the chronology.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. Establish some procedure for the final sequencing, such as choosing leaders from each group. Observe who uses sequence clues effectively and translates them into linguistically appropriate forms. Observe who works well with whom.

More:

1. Send one team out on a walk with the camera to photograph landmarks. After they return, another team tries to follow their path by using the pictures.

2. The children go on a treasure hunt. Sequence the clues using pictures.

3. Have someone take pictures of children making themselves look taller and shorter than they actually are. The children sequence the photos according to the heights in the pictures, not in real life. Then take pictures of the same children standing normally so that pictures can be sequenced to reflect the actual differences in height.

Informing/Narration

They need:

Genealogy charts, pencils, a series of questions, and willing grandparents or parents.

They do:

The students talk with their parents or grandparents about the past, particularly events that led to people getting married and having children, so they can fill in their own genealogy charts. Children may share the information they have gathered in many ways, depending on the needs and desires of individual students.

You do:

Your help in developing questions which help the child ask what he wants to know is essential. Some children may be able to generate the questions on their own; others may need help. Some may want to work in pairs with one person photographing the proceedings. Encourage the children to tape-record the interviews if possible. If children want to explain their genealogy charts to small or large groups, they will be informing by narration.

More:

1. Children interview several people who lived in the town at a certain time in order to collect narrations of events that happened then.

2. If there is a house or a business which has had several occupants, interviews with some of those occupants might reveal how the building has changed.

3. The children may deliver their reports as first-person accounts.

Informing/Narration

They need:

Puppets, preferably made by the children, depicting historical and seasonal characters (e.g., Santa Claus, witch).

They do:

The child researches a day in the life of a historical or seasonal character. She reports in the first person. The Santa Claus puppet might tell how he came to be. The witch puppet might describe a typical Halloween night, from beginning to end.

You do:

Children will need help in phrasing certain parts of their reports, but should be left mostly to their own devices in making up stories. Not everyone will want to give a first-person account in front of a whole group. Some may be more comfortable making presentations to smaller groups of friends they choose. Still others, while enjoying the research, will not want to share the information gathered with anyone but you. Observe who reports to what kind of audience, and plan other kinds of experiences each child might enjoy.

Informing/Narration

They need:

A short film or filmstrip without words; the action should be simple and obvious.

They do:

One group watches the film while the others are involved in other group activities, such as reading. When the film is over, children who have seen the movie are paired with children who have not seen it. Those who have seen the film tell the sequence of events to their partners. Any interaction is possible; questions should be encouraged so the partner is sure he knows the story well. When the storytelling is finished, show the film again, asking the pairs to watch carefully, especially for any differences between the events in the film and the story as it was to'd. The pairs should then discuss the differences.

You do:

The groups can easily carry out this assignment; you need only to manage the space and time, plus run the projector! While the groups are working, observe the interactions: Who asks questions? Who is not concerned with specifics, but prefers to muddle through? Who listens intently?

More:

1. Extend the activity by having the partner who has not seen the film tell the story to a third person who also has not seen the movie. Then show the film again and let the children discuss differences in the stories.

2. Ask those children who watched a certain TV show the night before to share the sequence of the story with a partner. All the children then compare stories.

Informing/Narration

They need:

A series of isolated sounds recorded on a cassette tape; space the sounds at intervals. Or send a team of children out with the cassette recorder to record a series of sounds.

They do:

The children listen to the sounds and imagine a story line to go with them. Anyone who wishes can share her story with a small group or with the class. The stories should be accompanied by the sounds.

You do:

Provide other audiences for the stories. Share the stories with the principal or another class, especially a class of older children. If some of the children are still interested in the project, they may develop the story into a puppet show or draw pictures on a write-on filmstrip and have a multimedia presentation.

More:

1. Make a tape using sounds from animate objects only. Then record sounds from inanimate objects only.

2. Tell a story and then send teams out to find sounds that fit into different places of the story.

Informing/Narration

They need:

Ingredients for making one of the following: tortillas, *chocolate, empanadas*, popcorn, seasonal cookies, etc. Many easy recipes are available in early childhood activity books, or you may use a simple recipe which you know. Measuring cups and spoons, bowls, and ingredients should be distributed so that teams of two or three children can work together.

They do:

The children follow the recipe, including measuring, mixing, cutting, kneading, cooking—all the necessary steps. For younger children, make a chart of the steps using pictures or examples. For example, half a teaspoon is indicated with a picture of a teaspoon cut in half; some sugar in a small plastic bag stapled to the board tells the child to add sugar. Older children can work from written recipes.

You do:

Review the recipe before beginning. Have several children repeat the recipe, with the others listening to make sure no steps are left out. While the children are measuring, no intervention is necessary. They will automatically inform each other of the sequence. As problems with the final products arise (for example, the *masa* for the tortillas is too moist), you might use strategies such as these:

a. "Your *masa* seems to have a lot of water."
b. "What will make your *masa* dry?"

More:

1. For older children, review a particular recipe, and then compare the steps with several other recipes for the same thing.

2. Make Christmas tree ornaments and other items in which steps must be taken to finish the products.

Informing/Narration

They need:

A large map of neighborhood streets around the school, made from wide masking tape or strips of paper taped to the floor. Label the streets and indicate some landmarks (e.g., a box for the corner store, a milk carton for the bank).

They do:

First a student gives you directions to his house from the school. You walk the "streets" on the map doing exactly what the speaker tells you to do. After you have demonstrated this activity, let the children give each other directions.

As they become skilled in giving and following directions, add other places to the map (e.g., the library, the bus stop). Let the children practice giving directions to these places from school or home.

You do:

It is helpful especially for very young children, if you model how to get to a destination (either your home or someone else's if yours is too far away). Then ask someone to walk the route for you. When someone is giving directions, they will automatically receive feedback from the walker without that person saying anything since he will be going either the right or the wrong way. Problems arise when informing is imprecise.

More:

1. Children make models of their houses from clay or other art materials and place them on the map. They can also visit businesses and make models of the different buildings.

2. Children interested in map making can make maps representing even larger areas (e.g., downtown, the suburb they live in) on sheets of white paper. They may work in pairs and give each other directions for getting to certain places. One gives directions while the other draws the route on the map.

Informing/Classification

They need:

Pads and pencils.

They do:

The students interview people about different subjects so they can compare their ideas. The ideas can be put into book form, if there is interest, or shared with members of the class. The task might be to finish sentences such as the following:

a. Red is . . .
b. A grandmother is someone who . . .
c. Kids should be able to . . .
d. A teacher is someone who . . .
e. The letter *w* is . . .

Pictures can be drawn to illustrate answers.

You do:

Encourage the children who participate in this activity to interview different-aged people. Their approaches to these people will be different, and consequently, their language will expand.

More:

1. Students interview other children about what they think different occupations involve ("What do you think an engineer does when he's working?", "What do beekeepers do?"). This activity can be correlated with a unit on community helpers.

2. Students interview children about games, foods, tasks they enjoy the most, the least, so-so.

Informing/Classification

They need:

Newsprint, at least two colors of thick tempera, aprons, and small work tables at which two or three children can work together.

They do:

The child folds a piece of newsprint in half, opens it, and drops thick paint on the paper. Then she presses the paper together, folding one half over the other, rubbing the paint out in various directions. She opens the paper and lets it dry.

You do:

With no language intervention from you, children will naturally use informing language. When they talk about similarities and differences of their pictures or about what their pictures look like, they are classifying. Observe which children make these statements extemporaneously. Who does not? Plan further work for those whose language indicates lack of classifying ability.

More:

Any art activity which creates abstract products can be used for a similar language goal: tie dying, throwing powdered dye on a wet sheet spread on the ground, etc.

Informing/Classification

They need:

Puppet of Santa Claus, preferably made by the children.

They do:

Using the puppet, the child gives a first-person account of how Santa Claus is similar to and different from Kris Kringle, St. Nicholas, and other Santas all over the world.

You do:

Except for working with the librarian to find resource materials, children interested in this experience should be on their own. Be open to questions, but not directing in any way. Observe the way in which children put together their information. Are the classification systems clear in the child's mind, or are there just a bunch of unrelated facts?

More:

1. Instead of puppets, provide large cutouts, or bring old clothes, and let the children make costumes.

2. If people from other countries live in your area (of if you know someone), invite them to come to the classroom. To prepare for their visit, the children can think of questions which would emphasize likenesses and differences of the visitors and themselves.

3. Using a puppet of a child, the student reports how his life is different from and similar to the lives of children in other countries. The title of this puppet show is "A Day in the Life of a Child."

4. Using any appropriate puppet, the child tells about Easter customs in different countries.

Informing/Classification

They need:

Children bring samples of their hobbies to school.

They do:

After listening to explanations of the hobbies, the children spread out all the samples. In teams of three or five, they decide which hobbies can be grouped together. Then they share their classification systems, and the reasons for them, with the entire group.

You do:

After making sure the children understand the task, you can sit back and watch! Observe who approaches other children first, who waits for someone to come to him. What linguistic clues do you have that certain children classify well?

More:

1. Use pictures of pets instead of hobbies (or maybe the pets themselves!).

2. Have everyone empty their pockets. The children group all the objects following the procedure described.

3. The children classify objects in the room. Anyone who wishes makes charts describing the classification system.

4. The children work individually, deciding how to group the hobbies. Then each child goes around the room until she finds a person, or persons, who has classified the hobbies in the same way. They discuss their classification systems to see if the same criteria were used.

Informing/Classification

They need:

Balancing scales of any kind; pairs of identical objects. Simple scales can be made from coat hangers and boxes attached with string if commercial scales are not available. Place one object from each pair on either side of the scale. Objects with the same characteristics may be included; for example, there may be two pairs of red blocks, one pair of large blocks, and one pair of small blocks.

They do:

The children work as partners. The first child places several objects on her scale and describes the objects to her partner. The second child finds the matching objects and places them on his side of the scale. The scale balances if the first child has described the objects clearly enough and if the second child responds correctly.

You do:

No language intervention is needed. To have children differentiate language use by age and status, vary the people who play together. Play the game yourself.

Informing/Classification

They need:

A sturdy box with a lid; rubber bands of different sizes, large enough to fit around the box; and scissors. Either you or the children cut a large hole in the middle of the lid before putting it on the box. Stretch the rubber bands across the opening in the box about one inch apart to make a "guitar."

Bottle caps and tape. Tape the caps to the children's thumbs and middle fingers. By tapping their fingers together, the children make sounds like cymbals.

Different-sized round boxes to use as drums.

Plastic combs and waxed paper. Fold a piece of waxed paper in half, and wrap it around the comb. The child hums through the paper to make a sound like a kazoo.

They do:

One child plucks the rubber bands to make different sounds on the "guitar." Other children accompany him with the finger cymbals, comb kazoos, and box drums. Children playing the same type of instrument may make up team names (e.g., The Loud Lumpers, The Deep Doodlers, The High Shriekers).

You do:

Without any language intervention from you, children will begin discussing how to make loud and soft noises, how to make deeper sounds, which rubber bands sound higher, etc.

More:

1. Using these instruments or rhythm instruments, groups try to imitate different sounds (e.g., a walrus, a hummingbird, a jackhammer, an airconditioner, a newborn baby).

2. In teams or pairs, children imitate sounds and have other children guess the sounds.

3. A guitarro, *a small four-stringed guitar, is a perfect instrument for young children. It is easily learned and provides much variety.*

Informing/Classification

They need:

A TV guide and access to a TV in each home.

They do:

Over a period of a week, teams watch TV and do tasks such as these:

a. Find two characters who look alike.
b. Find three men who cry.
c. Find two women who are alike in some way.
d. List four things that bionic people do.
e. List five actions that all animals do.

You do:

Establish some structure for sharing the information; for example, appoint a charting chairperson. If you do not lead the discussion at the end of the week, the children will have much more opportunity to inform their peers by classification. While the children are discussing, observe which characteristics some children regard as "same." Research shows that acquiring an understanding of the meaning of "sameness" takes a long time.

More:

1. Each child watches TV one evening and finds two people who are very different. She states how they are different and makes charts showing the differences.

2. Each child chooses one character on TV and states how that person is like him. Then the child selects someone who is different from him. How is this person different?

Informing/Classification

They need:

No materials are necessary, unless this activity is conducted indoors. Then many varied objects are necessary, either spread out on a table or hidden in nooks and crannies.

They do:

The children work in pairs or teams. One person sets up the scavenger task; here are some possibilities:

a. Find as many things as you can that are bigger than the book, but smaller than the windowpane.

b. Find at least three things that are heavier than the pencil, but lighter than the encyclopedia.

The person locating the items reports on the objects he finds. Objects may be hidden to make the task more difficult.

You do:

Although you may want to model the first task, the children will quickly catch on. Observe the children as they give directions. The child who understands what kind of objects she is asking the team member to find understands well the mode of classification.

More:

The children play "What's in Your Pocket?" A child asks individuals in the room if they have anything in their pockets that fits the classification given (e.g., something smaller than a pencil and heavier than a ruler).

Informing/Classification

They need:

A multitude of building materials such as glue, string, paper, natural objects, etc.

They do:

Each child invents something (e.g., a flying rock, a language, something she wants or needs). Have an Invention Fair where interested persons share their inventions by reading what their patents will say.

You do:

With no intervention from you, the children will automatically use informing language. As they prepare their patents, be available to help answer any questions. Join in this experience. Invent something *you* need!

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Many common objects such as string, a pan, a zipper, a rubber band, a clothespin, a cowboy hat, etc.

They do:

In teams the children think of many different ways the objects can be used; for example, what can you do with a pan besides cook in it? The team who names the most possibilities wins. The children may demonstrate their ideas to their group and to the class, if they want.

You do:

When choosing objects for this activity, think of items which are multipurpose. List alternative uses for each object before introducing it in class. As team members work together, they will naturally use evaluative language. Observe who uses cause-and-effect language well; words such as "because" and "when" are clues that this type of language is being used.

More:

Have a Stump-Your-Friends Fair. Everyone brings something from home that she thinks is multipurpose. If the group does not list all the uses the owner has thought of, she demonstrates the additional uses.

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Numerous art materials, including "junk" from home, from sewing centers, from the kitchen, etc. Spread newspapers over the area.

They do:

Using the art materials, each child creates an animal that can do something no other animal can do (e.g., seeing from all sides of its head). He names his animal.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. Children will automatically share their evaluations of the animals and will make statements about what their animals do best. Observe the children as they work; look for reflective and impulsive differences in children's strategies as they attack a problem. Do these differences affect the way they use language?

More:

For those who are interested, hold a tall-tale contest about the unique animals they have created. If the children are old enough, the tales can be put together in book form.

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Travel posters; books about your community, areas in the United States, and places around the world.

They do:

Each child plans a trip she would like to take. She estimates the cost of transportation, lodging, and food and plans what she wants to see.

You do:

As children begin planning, they might want to take a trip to a travel agency or make several phone calls to collect their data. Interest in air travel might lead to a trip to the airport. Before a field trip make arrangements by telling the community adults what certain class members are interested in. Send a volunteer parent if you're not able to go yourself. Making plans for the trip will encourage evaluative language; furthermore, the children will practice informative language by interacting with people in the community who have information they want to know.

More:

Let children in the class make arrangements for field trips. Planning what they need in order to go, determining what information they want to gather, and contacting people to help is natural use of informative language.

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Yarn or string, cut into many pieces of different lengths.

They do:

One team hides the yarn in places all around the room or, better yet, outside. Other players hunt for the yarn. When all the yarn has been found, each player places his pieces of yarn end to end on the floor or ground. As children compare, they'll note that the most pieces do not necessarily make the longest string.

You do:

Intervention is not necessary for the children to begin using evaluative language. What constitutes good use of informing by evaluative language? Observe the children and write down three characteristics of those who use this language function well.

More:

Lay all the strings out where they can be seen. Children use the strings for different tasks: making the shortest distance with the most strings, making the shortest distance with the fewest strings, etc. Or let the children create their own games with the yarn. When first graders were observed playing checkers (a game which is perhaps similar to some of the activities with yarn), they used informative language spontaneously as they predicted future moves and set up hypothetical situations.

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

A pad and pencil, an issue that has arisen in school (e.g., when should pencils be sharpened, why a juice machine isn't provided).

They do:

Students poll their classmates or schoolmates about the issue. As opinions are gathered, the interviewers categorize them, using descriptive or classificatory language. They then report the results either to you or to a group of fellow students.

You do:

Help children just beginning interviews to design simple polls with questions which can be answered *yes* or *no*. Later more elaborate polls can be taken. With only minimal guidance from you, children can present a case for an issue, utilizing all modes of discourse. As the children present their views, observe who uses descriptive language and classificatory language well. What are the characteristics of good evaluation?

More:

In election years hold mock elections. Appoint news reporters, TV crews, magazine reporters. When the election is over, compare differences in how evaluative language is used in magazines, newspapers, and television.

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Photographs or magazines from which children can cut pictures. Acetate sheets, tape, and grease pencils. Tracing paper and lead pencils may be substituted if acetate and grease pencils are not available.

They do:

Each child chooses a picture, tapes a sheet of acetate to it, and draws how the item will look in the future or how it looked in the past. The children share their pictures with their friends, if they wish.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. Children will automatically begin using evaluative language as they think about the past and future. This may be a good activity to accompany a social studies unit. Observe the children's language for use of verb tenses. Think of several other activities that will allow them to use different verb tenses in natural situations.

More:

Give several people the same photograph. Have them compare their pictures when they all have finished drawing. Undoubtedly children will use evaluative language as they explain why they think their interpretation is "right."

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Art materials such as glue, construction paper, cardboard, crayons, etc. Spread newspapers over the work area.

They do:

The children go outside, collect materials found in the environment, and create things from them. The objects show different characteristics of the environment (e.g., beauty, ugliness) and how the children respond to their surroundings (e.g., joy, sadness). They share their creations if they want.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. Children will automatically share with their neighbors why the materials they have found illlustrate the particular themes they've chosen to portray. Observe how the children use language to express feelings.

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

A Polaroid camera, envelopes, slips of paper.

They do:

In teams the children go outside and take pictures of things which show a population is living or has lived in a particular place; they do not photograph the population itself. For example, one team might photograph a raccoon's tracks. The teams display their pictures on a bulletin board and take turns guessing the identities of the populations. Each child writes her guess on a slip of paper and places it in an envelope under each picture. At the end of the week, the teams open the envelopes and see who has guessed correctly.

You do:

Since this activity is excellent as part of a science unit, concepts such as populations should have already been introduced. No language intervention will be necessary. Children will automatically begin using evaluative language with one another, both when taking pictures and making guesses. However, observe the children and note who uses the vocabulary of the unit in new, meaningful ways.

More:

The children take pictures of things that can't be photographed. For example, moving trees show evidence of air currents. This is also a good science activity.

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Lots and lots of plastic drinking straws; play dough or clay. Spread newspapers on the desks or floor before starting.

They do:

Individually, in pairs, or in teams, the children construct a structure (e.g., a bridge, a building) that will hold weight (e.g., newspapers, books) without breaking. Or they build a structure from one chair to another. They build the highest structure possible without its falling over.

You do:

No language intervention is necessary. Children will automatically use evaluative language as they propose alternatives for the constructions. If the structures fall apart and the team looks to you for help, you might have them review the steps they took and evaluate each step. Or simply ask what they think went wrong. Observe who considers many alternatives. How is language a part of this process? (Note: Children who are still in a concrete operational cognitive stage have difficulty considering many alternatives.)

More:

1. Let children who are interested use old computer cards to make as tall a structure as possible.

2. Refer to the unit "Structures" in Elementary Science Study *published by Webster/McGraw Hill, New York, New York.*

Informing/Evaluation

They need:

Materials needed will vary.

They do:

Each child tells you or his classmates who his favorite TV character is. Children who have chosen the same personality get together and decide what it is about the character that they like. They think of some unusual way to share the information with the others in the class (do a skit, draw a picture, make a model, give a first-person account, interview the character, etc.).

You do:

Your flexibility and material support is crucial to the success of this activity. However, no language intervention is necessary. Children will automatically use evaluative language as they discuss why the character is their favorite. Observe who uses adverbs to introduce clauses ("because . . ."); this is evidence of complex language.

More:

Use living people instead of TV characters. The students poll people of different ages to find out if there are differences of opinion about who is most admired, the funniest, or the nicest person they know. They present the information they have gathered in unique ways.